

LETTER  
TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE  
THE EARL FITZWILLIAM,  
OCCASIONED BY  
HIS TWO LETTERS  
TO THE  
EARL OF CARLISLE.

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BY  
William Playfair,  
AUTHOR OF THE COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL  
ATLAS, &c.

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LONDON :

Printed for JOHN STOCKDALE, Piccadilly, 1795.

*Price 1s.*

[Entered at Stationers' Hall.]

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**P**ERHAPS, my Lord, an answer to your two letters, from one who has not heard what those persons whom you accuse have to say for themselves, may in some respects be better than any answer that they can give; because it must arise from what you have yourself said, and not from any assertions, the meaning of which may be equivocal or doubtful.

The question, I do not consider as the simple one, of whether you, my Lord, or the Minister, are most to blame; that alone is not of great importance to the nation; but it is of great importance to know, whether the Minister at the head of affairs in this country is guilty of the heavy charges which you bring against him;\*

\* I may be permitted to believe the letters are actually written by his Lordship, otherwise Lord Carlisle, to whom

if he is capable of risking the peace of both kingdoms, and of committing to chance the fate of the great Roman Catholic question, merely for the sake of an individual man, or an individual family of B——ds? If so, it is a matter of most serious importance, that such an inconceivable degree of disinterested villany (for such I will call it) should be inquired into; or if it is possible that the Minister of this country, on purpose to ruin the reputation and importance of the D——e of P——d and his friends, should risk the peace and property of both kingdoms; it requires equally to be investigated.

they are addressed, could never have let them be repeatedly published without remonstrating. Besides, Mr. Debrett, his Lordship's bookseller, is not a man who would for the trifling profits of a shilling pamphlet have been accessory to so unfair a transaction. These, I think, are convincing proofs of the authenticity of the letter; the presumptive ones on the other side of the question are, that some of his Lordship's friends have offered to lay bets, with great odds, that the second letter is a spurious one. His Lordship's general character for modesty and candour are likewise presumptions, that neither of the letters are his, as they are totally devoid of modesty, and do not seem to have any of the characteristics which form his Lordship's reputation hitherto, as a candid, peaceable, and generous English nobleman, one might expect. A wag who had a good deal of ill nature, and heard forty to ten offered, that the letter was not his Lordship's, answered, I'll not take that, but five hundred guineas to give that his Lordship fathers the child.

Only



Only making one among the general mass of his Majesty's subjects, who wish to see things go on as well and peaceably as the circumstances of the times will permit, I was heartily sorry to see a storm brewing in Ireland ; but it did not appear to me to be a matter of very great public importance, whether a Minister in England, or a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, had committed the fault. Your letters to Lord Carlisle, however, totally changed my idea of the matter. It was that change that occasions my troubling your Lordship with this letter.

It is extremely unlucky for the public, and unfortunate for himself, when a gentleman is hurried by his own ambition, or by that of his friends, into a situation for which he has not been fitted by his talents or disposition.

I regard your Lordship as being more unfortunate than blameable in this affair, although your letter shews to what a degree you are irascible and ready to irritate, how spotless you are in your own eyes, and with what facility, blame without proof is thrown upon others. You are ready, you say, my Lord, to defend your conduct in every part ; whether measures or arrangements, you feel yourself able to defend its  
wisdom,

wisdom, justice, and propriety, naked and without support, but without fear and trembling.

If God Almighty had called before him the angel Gabriel to answer for himself, he could not have expressed a more angelic consciousness of wisdom and righteousness than your Lordship; and since the days of the Pharisees, we have only met with two such examples.

The Popes of Rome, my Lord, are infallible as they tell us, but they have the humility to attribute that heavenly quality to heaven, and not to themselves. The successors of Peter did not stand *naked and alone*, they were not such prodigies of perfection as your Lordship.

The next example of infallibility is in Mr. Necker, that astucious comptroller of the French finances. He resembled your Lordship still more than the Popes. His infallibility was almost all his own. He stood naked and alone opposed to all, and only acknowledged receiving assistance from his virtuous wife\* (who, it is to be presumed, was as naked as himself.) Mr. N. was similar in many things to your Lordship; he talked highly of himself, accused others in the

\* Mr. Necker in his books of finance speaks often of his wife, whom he calls Sa Vertueuse Epouse.

block, and never confessed a single error in his administration.

It is true, Mr. Necker administered in a kingdom rather larger than Ireland, and for a space of time something longer than your Lordship, but that seems to be more than compensated by the prodigious opposition your Lordship met with, when compared to him. Mr. Necker had more support than you, therefore he had less opposition. Mr. Necker had a feeble king and a virtuous wife to aid his good intentions, and had only against him the nobility, seventeen Parliaments, the court, sixty farmers-general, who had twenty-two thousand clerks and emissaries constantly employed in counteracting his plans; you, on the other hand, my Lord, *stood alone*, that is to say, you had against you the men that you turned out of office.\*

I am not the champion of the English minister, my Lord, his defence I do not undertake; but I cannot avoid attacking your Lordship, as

\* If all was unanimity when those men were out, they must have been the *only* opposition. What a wilful sort of a governor we have here!!! In all Ireland but three or four enemies in place, and those must be turned out; surely the King of England cannot say so much!



your letter appears to me to be one of the most vain, most unfair, and imprudent I have ever read. Your letter, as being made public, is no longer a letter to Lord Carlisle; *it is to the public*, and as such I have a right publicly to examine it, and this never can be done at any moment so favourable to its writer, as when only his side of the argument has been heard.

I leave to those to whom they are applied, to clear up the accusations of *insinuations, aspersions, suspicions, and calumnies*.

Whether the persons whom you accuse grossly betrayed and abandoned you unfeelingly, and whose councils, maxims, and measures you say you have been pursuing, are able to answer for themselves or not, is by no means the question that concerns the public at present, for as you accuse them without proof, until there is some to support your accusations, they do not concern us. Your Lordship's accusations against yourself, though expressed negatively, may, on the contrary, be considered as founded on truth, and as such we may attack you.

Your Lordship's business, as you express yourself, was to *bring back consequence and dignity to*

*English*



*English government, and restore the castle to its proper ministers.* What, then, my Lord, had your predecessors done? Had they degraded the English government, and left the castle in the hands of its enemies? Such, my Lord, is the conclusion from your assertion; whether this is to be ranked as calumny and aspersions, of which your Lordship so bitterly complains when levelled at yourself, depends upon your maintaining the truth of what you have so boldly asserted; for either your predecessor has betrayed the trust that was reposed in him, or your Lordship is guilty of calumny, than one of these two, there then can be no other alternative.

If then, my Lord, in a few lines you have described your own perfection in high characters, you have not failed, in as few, to bespatter others, and that, with an imprudence and injustice that is rarely to be seen. Supposing your predecessors were guilty of what you accuse them, is the first mention to be made of it in a public letter? Or are libels only the privilege of the great? If you support what you have asserted, a trial for high treason ought to be the consequence; if you do not support it, a trial for a malicious libel ought to be instituted against

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your

your Lordship. The public will, perhaps, be indiffer-  
 ent about which of the two is to take place,  
 but it is impossible to prove that one or other of  
 them is not necessary.

When people begin with such sort of attacks,  
 my Lord, they ought to have a great deal of time  
 to spare, for with a few lines you have cut out  
 work for what will be but a tedious, troublesome  
 piece of business, and which must end in the  
 disgrace of some of the parties. In the mean  
 time, the disgrace must lay with your Lordship,  
 because your accusation is like yourself, *naked*  
*and unsupported.*

Your next intention, my Lord, after restoring  
 the castle, was to shew that you and Lord  
 M——n held all the patronage of government  
 in your hands. This may admit of some dis-  
 pute, perhaps, as to its propriety, but none,  
 I suppose, with respect to its truth.

The continuing the salaries to those who were  
 displaced, which in one instance alone (without  
 counting the pens and ink) amounted to 2,300*l.*  
 a year, during the term of two joint lives, is

another question, altho' you say it was not only a matter of propriety but of justice.\*

Upon this subject, my Lord, I cannot help shewing you how Mr. Necker, the other perfect man, acted on a similar occasion. Mr. N. was solicited to give to a man a pension of a thousand crowns, which, it was alledged, was but a small sum to come out of the treasury of France. "A thousand crowns!" (exclaimed the minister) "do you consider, Sir, that half a dozen villages may be obliged to eat dry bread half the year to pay that thousand crowns?" By a similar calculation, how many poor cottagers in Ireland, my Lord, must go supper-less to bed to pension the man you put out of place; but when we count not the man, but the men, my Lord, we who take things coolly, and consider them calmly, in England, are not certain if the people of Ireland, in spite of all their enthusiasm, have any real reason to be very proud of your Lordship's favours; they are something like those of the French republicans; they cost pretty dear.

\* I know that the 2300 was not to one of the two first persons who were dismissed; at least, I think the letter may be understood so, but it is under the article of dismissals, and that is enough for the fitness of truth and argument.

† About 126%. English money.



The tone and style of Mr. C——e, which rendered his approach to a superior not to be supported, was it seems to have cost 1200*l.* a year to poor Ireland; I believe, my Lord, no man is more inclined to shew respect for his superiors than I am; I do it from principle, as well as from habit; and much as I blame the want of respect from inferiors, I confess I have oftener found it arise from a want of dignity in the superior than from any thing else; at any rate, those *arrangements of feelings* were very dear to the nation at twelve hundred a year.

One word more still on the dismissals, my Lord, and then I shall dismiss them; if your Lordship is at the pains to calculate, that as a Lord Lieutenant is appointed only for three years, and his salary in that period amounts to 36,000*l.* if he gives life annuities for 3600*l.* a year, it is equal to doubling the expense of his government; but by your Lordship's plan, the annuities would have amounted to a much greater sum; therefore the expense of your Lordship's administration would have been immense, and out of all reasonable proportion. Besides this, why displace good men? and why pension bad men? this, my Lord, is a great question, not less important than the Roman Catholic question itself; it is a question debated



debated and debating all over Europe, and which a man who glories in the name of Whig, ought not to determine as your Lordship has done.

You now begin about Mr. B——d; you decided in removing him, you say, *in order that your Lordship's administration might not in its dawn be clouded by leaving in power and authority so much imputed malversation.*

Your Lordship very wisely avoids directly charging him, by the word *imputed*; I do not know Mr. B——d, tho' I have heard him very highly spoken of, both as a private and a public man; I have been told that he was faithful to his King and country, and certainly he never stirred up during the course of a long public life, so scandalous a dispute for himself and for his friends, as that into which your Lordship's short administration has betrayed you and your's. Mr. B——d had therefore one virtue, which in a public man I greatly esteem, he was conciliating and prudent, he was not afraid of the approach of inferiors, and what must weigh above all with respect to those who read your Lordship's Letter, the attack upon him for malversation is unsupported, and insidiously brought forward; for by your use of the word *imputed*, you may shelter yourself from a prosecution under vague scandalous reports.

It

It would appear, my Lord, that when you wrote your first letter, you did not mean to write the second : for you say that when you first mentioned to Mr. P—t your intention of dismissing Mr. B——d, *he did not offer the slightest objection, nor offer a word in favour of that gentleman*; now the first part of your second letter tends to prove that the dismissal of Mr. B——d was the first cause of your disgrace, that the great Roman Catholic question had nothing to do with it. Now if Mr. P——t heard this change of men announced, without making any observations, it is a great presumption against your other arguments, and with people who know not any thing more than the public in general may be supposed to know, will appear a pretty conclusive argument, that measures and not men were what governed Mr. P——t in his conduct with respect to Ireland; that is to say, that people will be inclined to approve of his conduct and to blame your's, in which, from your own letter, there appears to have been nothing but a selfish desire of patronage and preserving personal dignity, by displacing men who approached their superiors in too familiar a style, and sacrificing the interests of the people, by granting great pensions, to satisfy little passions.

I do not know, my Lord, whether you are what modern reformers call a democrat, nor do  
I know

I know whether Thomas Paine is one in his heart; but I know that if all rulers were to act as you have done, I should soon become a democrat; for what Paine has supposed, you have done: the real interests of the many have been sacrificed to the whims and fancies of an individual; who, when all said and done, was only the shadow of a king, during the pleasure of a king. -

I come now, my Lord, to your Second Letter; for as to your supply of two hundred thousand pounds; that sum, great as it is, taken from the pockets of a loyal and an indigent people; would not do more than raise a capital to pay the pensions which your ill humour has rendered necessary according to your own plan; it is, therefore, not to be considered as a very great affair with respect to your Lordship, though with respect to the Irish nation it deserves every degree of approbation, and it shews that Ireland understands its real interests in the present crisis, when it is the wish of all men who love freedom or peace, to unite themselves and stand firm against a system of anarchy, new in the annals of mankind, and which does nothing less than menace all civil order with ruin and destruction.

It



It appears to a person who considers the magnitude of the Roman Catholic question, and the precipitancy with which it had been brought forward during the few weeks of your Lordship's administration; that it was a gentle kind of violence (what the French call *une douce violence*) that was done to you by your friends there when you were *forced* to favour the views of the Catholics in so quick a manner. Does not your Lordship suspect that you have been led into that, not with an expectation on their part of immediately succeeding under your administration with the whole change of system, but that it was done only to bring forward the question in its most formidable shape, at a time when England, embarrassed with an unsuccessful and expensive war, and when an invasion is threatened by our enemies, must be expected to give it in favour of the Roman Catholics? Did not your Excellency see that some persons who advised those measures *laid the stake at your expense*, that there was never a time, except that of actual revolt, when, a Lord Lieutenant had it not in his power to put off for a few months so important a question?

But, my Lord, it is very difficult to give an appearance of any *attempt to delay* on the side of  
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the Irish administration ; for England has been accused by some of the leaders of the Catholic party of *swindling Ireland out of the supplies of the year* ; even your Lordship says, that unanimity, such as no Lord Lieutenant had ever experienced, had taken place. The epoch of your Lordship's acquiescence to the demands of the Catholics *must, then, have been previous to the agitating the question of those supplies, and of consequence previous to the possibility of your procuring any answer from the English Minister to your letter on that subject.*

It would appear, that if the Minister swindled Ireland, as is pretended, it was done by your Lordship's being sent there ; for from the time of your arrival every thing went smoothly. You will not make us, then, believe, my Lord, that it was during your short administration, so unanimous and so smooth, that the Roman Catholics changed their situation, from that of having demands to make, and having those demands complied with. No, my Lord, you must excuse me ; it appears plainly from your own letter, that from the *beginning of your administration* the Roman Catholics knew, that as far as depended upon you the change was certain.

If this is the case, the English ministry might well be displeased ; for your Lordship owns, that on your leaving England, your instructions and the result of councils held for the purpose were, that if the Roman Catholic demands must be complied with, it must at all events be put off till as distant a period as possible.

Your Lordship wrote to England saying, that the Roman Catholics could not be put off in their demands to a distant period. What are we then to conclude ? that your Lordship had never resisted an immediate compliance to their claims.

Such, with respect to your conduct on the Roman Catholic business, must be the opinion of every one who reads your Lordship's letter with any degree of attention, and if they have once considered that, your other two assertions must fall to the ground, or rather your last assertion, because that destroys the others.

I have not the honour of knowing or of being known to your Lordship. I am, however, very much inclined, from what on all hands I have heard, to respect your Lordship's character as a Gentleman, and I therefore am not a little astonished at an oversight in the tactics of your letter.

ter. You want to impress upon men's minds that the Roman Catholic business has nothing to do with your recal ; next, that the dismissal of Mr. B-----d is represented as the cause ; and lastly, that the *only* cause is the Minister's wish to destroy the reputation and importance of the D---e of P-----d and his friends.

The French Proverb, that he who proves too much proves nothing, seems to me to be true, my Lord, as it respects yourself, but not true as it respects others in this case ; for tho' your double cause for the same effect leaves us to doubt of the reality of both causes, it shews us very clearly, that you wish to set at variance the Minister and the Duke. If you did not wish so, why destroy all that you had said before about Mr. B-----d being the cause ? it was a much more popular explanation of the thing ; it was more easily conceived ; it was more probable and more natural.

A plain simple man who is no courtier, could suppose, that Mr. B---d, when displaced, contrived to set the Minister to think seriously on the Roman Catholic question, and that afraid of what was coming, he had unjustly sacrificed your Lordship ; but it is not so easy to conceive a Minister planning six months ago to get a party into office, to have your Lordship (one of that party) named Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to



conceive that things would go as they have done, and be stopped as they were stopped; the invention of such a head would surpass, if possible, the blackness of such a heart; it is therefore a combination not to be so readily conceived as the other, and of consequence, one that by no means answers your Lordship's purpose so well, if it is to vindicate yourself that you write; and if it is to the nation at large that you appeal, which is to be presumed, otherwise the noble Lord to whom you wrote would not have published the letter, nor allowed it to be published.

We are plain simple men, my Lord, in this country, and do not pretend to know all the intrigues that may be in courts; but we conceive that ministers may be like other men, and perhaps selfish and ambitious. You will not, then, easily make any one believe, that for the sake of a family in Ireland, whether it begins with a B. or a G. the Minister will risque his popularity, himself, and this kingdom; this is too like Tom Paine's reasoning about ministers making war to enrich their friends. Nor can we easily conceive how a minister who this year has eighteen millions at his command, would not rather sacrifice a few thousands to gratify an individual, or a few individuals, than change the whole political system with regard to Ireland. No, no; the cause and the effect bear no reasonable proportion.

Next,



Next, as to the Minister's plan, with regard to the discrediting the party to which your Lordship belonged, I have already said, that you have given much less probability to that supposition, which seems to be still weakened by the very idea upon which it is grounded.

You undoubtedly suppose great ambition and superior manœuvres in a minister capable of laying so long and so deep a plan to ruin you and your friends: but could a minister capable of foreseeing from your character, your facility with the Irish Catholics, capable of calculating so minutely all events, be at the same time so blind as to run the risk of disturbing the public peace, and, perhaps, ruining the kingdom, for such a trifling victory? Could so able a minister, as he must have been in that case, expect that such an intrigue could be carried on without a discovery disgraceful and ruinous to himself, even if it should happen to succeed in the first instance?

But, my Lord, the public learns something more from all this: a corner of the cloven foot appears. Calculations have, it would appear, been made that the secretaryship of state is not entire, that it is divided in order to gratify some people in office and to displease others. And at  
what

what time are noble Lords thinking of such things? at a time when all the nobility of the greatest kingdom in Europe are banished from home and living upon charity; and that one general system of plunder menaces all ranks in society with destruction; it is at this time that your Lordship, it seems, has been making these calculations of private interest for yourself and friends; the public cannot certainly approve of that part of your Lordship's conduct; nor can I, for one, conceive how noblemen, who have so much at stake and who feel themselves (to say nothing more) so comfortable in the present state of things, make so light of the danger which menaces them. What would the descendants of the Bethunes, the Richelieus, the Rochefacaults, and the Fleurys give? nay, of the first branch of the house of Bourbon itself, to enjoy the rank, importance, and wealth of a British nobleman? Would they seek to raise a storm? No; for they have felt one already, and their sufferings might be a lesson to those who have seen, though they luckily have not felt.

Your Lordship would have escaped the accusation of wishing to excite discord, if the letter had been confined to a mere exculpation of your conduct as viceroy of Ireland, because that was natural, and even necessary; neither could it have appeared very strange, if, in order to strengthen

strengthen your exculpatory arguments, you had added some blame on the Minister, such as are in the first part of your letter about Mr. B——d; not that it is here the business to defend the Minister in what he has done, for he must take the consequences of his own actions like other people; but because it is evidently for the sake of making a breach, and not of vindicating yourself, that you exert yourself so eagerly to prove that your disgrace was brought on with a long-concerted, and insidious design.

Your Lordship's letter not having any immediate relation to the Roman Catholic question, which will, no doubt, be speedily agitated at great length, and on both sides with great ability, would make it very useless and improper to enter upon that subject here, but you will give me leave to observe (not that I pretend to say that it is so) that it appears to a simple reader like myself, that the Roman Catholics are full as much afraid of mixing your Lordship's conduct with the grand question, as you are of admitting the grand question to have any connection with your recal.

Many people will be inclined to believe that the Catholics of Ireland, who could not but expect some opposition, are fully, in their minds, contented with having got the question fairly brought



brought to issue. Now that they are sure not to lose any thing by it, and have still some chance of gaining; at any rate they have succeeded in working up the public mind to a head upon that subject such as has scarcely ever been remembered, and which certainly could not have happened, had not those hopes been given during your Lordship's administration, which nothing but FULL powers for that purpose from the court that sent you could have authorized.

Such, my Lord, are the arguments which the reading of your letter suggests to a person who has not heard a single syllable on the other side of the question; you see they are not very favourable to your Lordship, who must at least have by this time learnt, that to be between the hammer and the anvil, between a British Minister and the Catholics of Ireland, one must be of pretty hard metal not to receive some bruises. But it is not in the government of Ireland alone that bruises are to be got; in all governments where a man is put between his duty as a ruler, and his feelings as a man, the same will be the case, and always has been from the Emperor of the Indies to the wise and virtuous governor of Barataria.

*London,*

*April 10, 1795.*

*The*